

INTRODUCTION OF RUSSELL THOMAS AT ALL SAINTS CHURCH SUNDAY, APRIL 29, 2001

On Tuesday, January 9, 2001, Russell Thomas walked into my sophomore level Speech Communication classroom on the South Campus of Florida Community College.

Within a brief period, I knew his being in my class was going to be something special.

The first clue I had was where Russell chose to sit. Very deliberately he chose the first desk in the row directly in front of me. He sat down, looked up at me and smiled.

Students are terrified of a speech class and of a speech teacher. They sit as far away as possible on that first day. They never sit that close to the front or that close to me unless there is no seat left in the room.

Several in the class had seen Russell play and knew he was on a basketball scholarship for FCCJ.

Russell delivered his speeches. They were well researched and dealt with subjects with which he had some experience.

He spoke to us of being young in the Bronx, of violence, of drugs, of family, of friendships. He spoke to us of survival.

He found the places where the lives of the young people in our class intersected with the lives of the young people where he grew up.

He touched the commonplaces they shared no matter whether it was in the urban sprawl of the Bronx or in our city on the St. Johns.

Russell never missed a day of class. It became a tradition in our class that we could not and would not begin until Russell was there.

We watched him play basketball. The students were given extra attention if they had been seen or heard by Russell at a basketball game.

By the way, he is a straight "A" student, a business major, and a genius at desktop publishing. He will be attending a Basketball Camp in Pittsburgh this summer with coaches whose names I cannot pronounce.

Russell was special to our class and he is special to me. That is why we share him with you today. May I present to you my favorite student, Russell Thomas.